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### **704th EOD Diffuses IEDs**

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The 704th EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Company responds to and diffuses Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) throughout the 155th Brigade Combat Team's Area of Operations (AO). Lately, they've had fewer calls in Task Force Eaglehorse's AO.

Task Force 2/11 Armored Cavalry Regiment, nicknamed Task Force Eaglehorse, is one of five Task Forces attached to the 155th BCT. Stationed at FOB Kalsu, the Task Force is located thirty miles south of Baghdad. Compared to the number of IEDs emplaced against other BCT Task Forces, "2/11 has had the largest IED decrease since we arrived here in January," according to the Task Force's Assistant Intelligence Officer, 1st Lt. Michael Simpson.

IED activity in the Eaglehorse Area of Operations, AO Battle, has decreased for a variety of reasons. One reason is that Task Force 2/11 has worked together with Iraqi Security Forces to capture or neutralize a large number of the insurgent leaders in AO Battle. Another reason is that key players from Task Force Eaglehorse and the Iraqi Government are revitalizing local businesses. New projects to rebuild the area have created new job opportunities. As a result, many citizens who were once penniless have now chosen to embrace capitalism as opposed to crime and insurgency. Also, in the wake of Operation Thunder Woodstock—a recent information and targeting campaign led by the Iraqi Army—IED activity in AO Battle has comparatively dropped.

That still does not stop EOD Soldiers and their Security Team from taking every precaution possible. "If anything, we've become more attentive than less, given the slow-down," remarks Staff Sgt. Jacob Diaz, leader of the EOD Security Team. The EOD Security Team escorts EOD personnel to reported IED sites. Upon arrival at a site, the Team provides individual security for EOD personnel, they ensure that the area around the EOD Soldiers is cordoned off, and they ensure that no secondary IEDs are nearby.

The EOD Security Team is unique because they are not a part of the 704th EOD Company. The Security Team consists, rather, of a mixture of Task Force Eaglehorse Soldiers—men who vary between having combat arms and combat support backgrounds. Infantrymen, medics, mechanics, fuel handlers, and scouts are among the many Specialty Soldiers that comprise the Security Team. "The guys come from everywhere, but at the end of the day, a Soldier is a Soldier," remarks Diaz. "The Team that we have is a good, well rounded bunch, and I'd stand them up against anybody."

Captain Dave Herbst, Commander of the 704th EOD Company, agrees with Diaz. According to Herbst, "These [Security Team] guys are good. Whenever we roll, they ensure that we vary our approaches and routes. Also, they go out of their way to watch our backs. Unlike some of the Security Teams that we have worked with, the 2/11 Security Team is always clear about the fact

that their mission is to escort and protect us. I wish that every Security Team could be like the 2/11 crew."

Despite all of the praise, no one in the 704th or the Eaglehorse Security Team thinks of himself as invincible. According to Spc. Russel Gadsden, one of the Security Team's Dismounts, "We're good at what we do, but I've got to admit that every time we go out, I do get a little nervous. I feel the same way everyone else feels whenever they roll out of the FOB. Whenever we get a call, I just say a little prayer to myself and drive on. The good thing is, when we roll, we know that most of the time, we're rolling straight to it [the IED site]. Whereas, other patrols don't wake up planning to encounter IEDs like we do."

Once the EOD Command Post (CP) receives an IED call, the CP immediately informs the Security Team. The Security Team then has ten minutes to report to the Command Post. The Team must arrive in full uniform; they must have their weapons, radios, and vehicles ready to execute a mission. Within fifteen minutes after the IED call, the Security Team must choose and disseminate primary and alternate routes to the IED site. No more than 30 minutes after the call, the patrol must depart the FOB. From there, the patrol conducts a tactical movement en route to the reported IED. Before the number of IEDs in AO Battle decreased, it was very common for the EOD patrol to receive one to ten follow-on missions after the first IED call. Each mission lasts anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours. The EOD Security Team is on call at all times.

Since Task Force Eaglehorse deployed to Iraq in January, the EOD Soldiers working in AO Battle have responded to several hundred reports of IEDs. However, due to the diligence of the Eaglehorse Security Team, no EOD or Security Team Soldier has been killed in action. According to Diaz, "So far, we've run a tight ship. Our hard work and discipline are what have gotten us this far. Although the threat is getting smaller, until we set foot back in the United States, this is the way we plan to keep doing things."

By 1st LT James Hendon